



Agenda Item #8

Application 2024-27-CA

DETAILS

Location:

251 Government Street

Summary of Request:

Install a 20.17 sf storefront sign on north elevation

Applicant (as applicable):

Wrico Signs, Inc.

Property Owner:

251 Government Street, LLC

Historic District:

Church Street East

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- Including the proposed sign, the total sign square footage at 251 Government Street would exceed the 64 square feet allowed in the *Design Review Guidelines for Mobile's Historic Districts*.
- All other aspects of the new storefront sign conform to the *Guidelines*.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Church Street East Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1971 under Criteria A (historic significance) and C (architectural significance) for its local significance in the areas of architecture, education, and urban planning. The district is significant for its concentration of multiple 19th century architectural styles and because it encompasses the site of Mobile in the early 1700s. The district boundaries were expanded in 1984 and 2005.

The property at 251 Government Street, currently known as the Admiral Hotel, was constructed between 1939 and 1940. The 12-story commercial building is rendered in a simplified classical style typical of the inter-war period and Great Depression era. Classical details include the tripartite building composition with a simple triangular pediment over the recessed center portion. The structure is primarily clad in red brick with limestone cladding at the first and second floors along Government Street and Joachim Street. At the two uppermost stories, limestone window surrounds, sill course, lintel course, and cornice provide restrained detailing to the otherwise plain façade.

The property operated as the Admiral Semmes Hotel continually between 1940 and its closure 1978. Following significant damage to the structure during Hurricane Frederic in 1979, plans were scrapped to redevelop the property as a retirement community. The property was then vacant for 6 years before undergoing a significant interior renovation and reopening as the Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel in 1985. The property has since undergone renovations following changes in ownership in 2014 and 2022.

According to Historic Development Department files, this property appeared ten times before the Architectural Review Board (ARB). In 1984, the ARB approved installation of new sidewalks in July, lighting changes in August, and installation of parking signs in December. In August 1986, the ARB approved alterations to parking signage. In March 1991, the ARB denied installation of aluminum or vinyl awnings as inappropriate but did approve installation of new canvas awnings on the existing frames. In September 1991, the ARB denied an application to install an internally lit sign in excess of the size limit of 64 square-feet then in place. The applicant subsequently received a Sign Variance from the Board of Zoning Adjustment in November 1992, and a new application for a 65-square-foot sign with individual backlit letters received staff-level approval in June 1993. In November 2003, the ARB approved installation of two raceway mounted channel letter signs, noting that the proposed signs fell within the limits allowed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment in 1993. In April 2007, the ARB approved placement of antennae and repeaters on the roof. In April 2010, approval was granted for landscape improvements, including resurfacing the parking lot and installing an aluminum fence and gates. Most recently, in March 2015, the ARB approved installation of the existing 156-square-foot vertical signage on the south elevation, ground-level fenestration changes, installation of lighting under balconies, and replacement of awnings at the ground floor and upper levels.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Remove existing double-sided vertical signs on Government Street and Joachim Street.
 - a. The two signs measure 2' in width by 10' in height.
 - b. The total square footage of both signs amount to 80 square feet.
2. The two wall-mounted building signs and large vertical "interstate" sign on the south elevation would remain.
 - a. Building signs on north and east elevations each measure 2' square, for a total area of 8 square feet.
 - b. Vertical sign on south elevation measures 3'8" in width and 85' in height, for a total area of 156 square feet.
 - c. These signs together amount to 164 square feet.
3. Install one single-faced storefront sign on the north elevation of the property facing Government Street.

- a. The storefront sign would measure 1'-11" high, 11' wide, and 4" deep and would be made of welded aluminum painted gloss black (21.08 sf).
- b. The storefront sign would be suspended from the underside of the iron canopy structure that extends over the public pedestrian sidewalk. The storefront sign would be centered over the main Government Street entrance doors.
- c. The sign text would consist of the business name (The Admiral Hotel). Letters would be aluminum with either a polished or brushed anodized finish in a gold color.

APPLICABLE STANDARDS (*Design Review Guidelines for Mobile's Historic Districts*)

1. Design a new sign to be compatible with the character of a building and the district. (11.3)
2. New signs are restricted to a maximum of 64 square feet.
 - Directional signage is not counted toward the total square footage allotment. (11.5)
3. Place a sign to be compatible with those in the district.
 - Mount a sign to fit within existing architectural features. (11.6)
4. Use a sign material that is compatible with the materials of the building on which it is placed and the district. New materials that achieve the effect of traditional materials and lighting solutions will be considered on a case by case basis.
 - Do not use highly reflective materials for a sign. All plastic faced box signs are not allowed.
 - Design a sign to be subordinate to the building façade. (11.7)

5. ACCEPTABLE SIGN MATERIALS

Sign materials that are similar in character, performance, and durability to historic commercial signage in the district are acceptable. These often include:

- Painted or carved wood
- Individual wood or cast metal letters or symbols
- Stone, such as slate, marble, or sandstone
- Painted, gilded, or sandblasted glass
- Metal, provided it is appropriate to the architectural character of the building

UNACCEPTABLE SIGN MATERIALS

Sign materials that are not similar in character, permanence and durability to historic commercial signage in the district are unacceptable. These often include:

- Whole plastic face
- Metal inappropriate for the architectural character of the building (11.9)

STAFF ANALYSIS

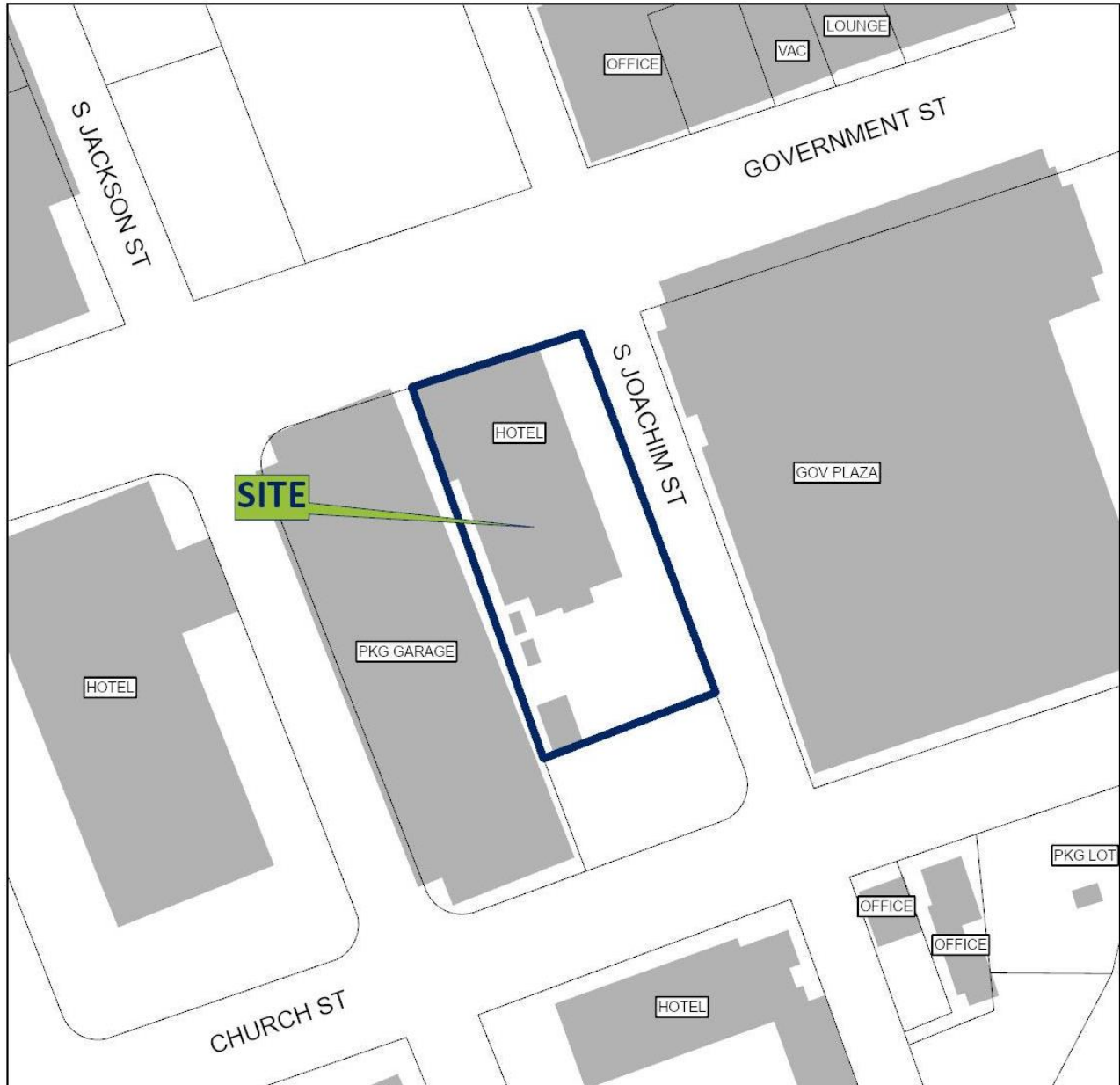
The application involves the installation of a storefront sign with an area of approximately 21 square feet on a contributing property located on Government Street in the Old Dauphin Way District. The application also proposes removal of two existing vertical signs from the Government Street and Joachim Street elevations which together amount to approximately 80 square feet of signage.


The proposed signage alterations would bring the total sign square footage to approximately 164 square feet, or 100 feet over the 64 square feet allowed in the *Guidelines* (11.5). However, it should be noted that the application would reduce the total square footage, which is currently around 244 square feet. The majority of this total square footage is due to the 156-square-foot sign on the building's south elevation, which the ARB approved in March 2015. At that time, the ARB's approval was made contingent on the owner receiving a variance from the Board of Zoning Adjustment for the large vertical signage. This variance was approved at the regular Board of Zoning Adjustment's regular monthly meeting on July 6, 2015.

The proposed signage would be constructed of a material compatible with the historic building, and the intended placement suspended from the balcony and facing Government Street is also appropriate to the character of the building as instructed by the *Guidelines* (11.6, 11.7). The lettering will not be lit.

The *Guidelines* instruct that signage should be designed “to be compatible with the character of a building and the district.” (11.3) Although the size of the proposed signage would place the total signage square footage in excess of that allowed by the *Guidelines*, the proposed removal of two existing signs would bring the total square footage of signs down by about 60 square feet. The proposed alterations would have little to no impact on the pedestrian experience of signage at this property along Government and Joachim Streets.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER <u>8</u> DATE <u>5/15/2024</u>	 NTS
APPLICANT <u>Wrico Signs, Inc. on behalf of 251 Government Street, LLC.</u>	
PROJECT <u>Install a 20.17sf blade sign on north elevation</u>	

Site Photos – 251 Government Street



1. North and east elevations, looking southwest



2. South elevation, looking north; note existing 156sf sign



3. South and west elevations, looking northeast



4. Proposed sign location on north elevation



5. Existing blade sign to be removed, east elevation



6. Existing building sign, to remain



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Proof 2

3345 HALLS MILL RD. • MOBILE, AL 36606 • 251-478-8020 • wricosigns.com

Exterior Government St. Elevation Non-Illuminated Signage

Gloss Black Ceiling Mount Cabinet

with Polished **OR** Anodized Brushed Gold Letters



Gold Letters Choice:

Polished

Brushed

Placement Approval: _____

Art Approval: _____

Scale: Approximate

Date: _____

Date: 03-21-2024 JC

We recommend looking at all proofs on a computer screen, not a cell phone.

Gloss black cabinet, as slim as possible. Metal cabinet with polished gold aluminum letters 3/4" non-illuminated (least costly metal for the material)

